

## House Passes Legislation to Create

Monday, September 17 2007

WASHINGTON, DC &ndash;

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&ldquo;Today&rsquo;s approval in the House represents a very important step for the creation of a Northern Border Regional Commission to focus on economic development and job creation,&rdquo; said Michaud. &ldquo;Maine and the entire region have been faced with tough economic circumstances that have caused us to lose jobs and businesses, to see our incomes stay flat, and to see our young people leaving. Federal investment in our region would help us capitalize on our region&rsquo;s great assets to build a stronger economy for the future.&rdquo;

The Northern Border Regional Commission would bring investment, leadership, and focus to regional economic development efforts. It would be charged with investing \$40 million per year &mdash; rising to \$60 million per year by 2012 &mdash; in federal resources for economic development and job creation in the most economically distressed areas of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York.

&ldquo;Creating a regional commission would give us the chance to look at economic development in a whole new way: as a challenge that we can tackle together as a region,&rdquo; said Michaud. &ldquo;Increased federal investment can help us build on our strengths to move our economy forward. We know that we have all the tools we need in our state and our region to build a bright future for our children &mdash; I want to make sure that the federal government gives us the investment we need to make this future a reality.&rdquo;

The bill, as in years past, has gained bipartisan support from Members of Congress in the Northern Border region. Congressmen Paul Hodes (D-NH), Michael Arcuri (D-NY), John McHugh (R-NY), Tom Allen (D-ME), and Peter Welch (D-VT) were all original cosponsors. The bill has also enjoyed the support of a diverse range of economic development experts and advocacy groups.

&ldquo;If we&rsquo;re going to fix the persistent challenges we face in Aroostook County with attracting businesses, building new investment, creating jobs, and keeping young people, we need federal resources and a regional approach,&rdquo; said Robert Clark, Executive Director of Northern Maine Development Commission. &ldquo;This bill will give us exactly the type of investment and coordinated regional leadership that we need here in northern Maine.&rdquo;

&ldquo;This bill will help address Maine&rsquo;s transportation and infrastructure challenges,&rdquo; said Maria Fuentes, Executive Director of the Maine Better Transportation Association. &ldquo;We applaud Congressman Michaud for taking our transportation funding crisis seriously, and for recognizing that investing in our system is critical for the safety of Maine&rsquo;s citizens and for revitalizing our economy.&rdquo;

A copy of Congressman Michaud&rsquo;s floor statement is attached. Additional information on the Northern Border Regional Commission can be found by visiting <http://michaud.house.gov>.

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Statement of Congressman Mike Michaud

on the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007

September 17, 2007

Mr. Speaker, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 represents a vision for economic development in our nation that will help Americans in the most distressed regions of our country.

In the Northern Border region, we have seen a clear, persistent pattern of economic distress.

If you look at the 36 counties that lie on the border or right next to the border between Maine and Cayuga County, New York, you find

- poverty above the national average,
- median household income that is more than \$6500 below the national average,
- persistent unemployment through layoffs in traditional manufacturing industries,
- and most striking of all, a meager gain of only 0.6% in population between 1990 and 2000, compared to 13% growth nationally over the same period.
- In short, Mr. Speaker, our mills are closing, our young people are leaving, and too many of our workers are looking for work. Clearly, this region has a common set of challenges, and a compelling need for investment and new growth.

As a mill worker for 28 years, I understand these particular challenges in the border region of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. Like my father and grandfather before me, I left school and went straight to work in the paper mill in my home town. 28 years later, and two days after I was elected to Congress, the mill went bankrupt, and my hometown was devastated.

The story of my town and the mill where I worked has been repeated across our region. That is why we need to support our region's industries and build new job opportunities &mdash; and that is why we need the investment, leadership, and focus in our regional economic development that a Northern Border Regional Commission would bring.

The Northern Border commission would help the region invest in transportation, health care, agriculture, broadband, and alternative energy. It can be a partner with business to maintain our industries and build new industry clusters. It can help us create jobs for the long term.

We have all the ingredients we need to face our challenges head-on, and make our region an economic engine &mdash; this new commission would help us make a fundamental change in our future.

In closing, I would like to thank all of my fellow co-sponsors for their hard, bipartisan work on this bill, and I would like to recognize the tremendous efforts of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on both sides of the aisle in fashioning this bill &mdash; especially our Chairman, Mr. Oberstar and our Subcommittee Chair Ms. Norton.

This bill represents a new way forward for economic development in our nation &mdash; for the places and the people that need it most. Let's pass this bill and give our people the hope and the future that they deserve. I yield back.